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To: All Mahjong/Tin Kau Licensees

Third Confirmed Case of Human Infection with Avian Influenza A(H7N9) Virus

As advised by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health, there is a third confirmed case of human infection with avian influenza A (H7N9) virus in Hong Kong on 8 January.

The patient is a 65-year-old man with underlying medical condition. His nasopharyngeal aspirate was tested positive for avian influenza A(H7N9) virus by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) of the CHP on 8 January. The patient is currently under isolation for further management in QMH in critical condition. Initial investigation by the CHP revealed that the patient had travelled to Shenzhen with his family member from 1 to 2 January. They passed by a wet market in Shenzhen on 1 January. In Hong Kong, the patient did not go into wet markets, but he may have passed the entrance of Pei Ho Street Market in Sham Shui Po every morning. Infection is considered to be outside Hong Kong. The investigation is ongoing.

The DH's epidemiological investigation, enhanced disease surveillance, port health measures and health education have been in full swing since the Government escalated the response level under the Preparedness Plan for Influenza Pandemic from 'Alert' to 'Serious'.

As of 8 January, there are a total of 156 laboratory-confirmed human cases with avian influenza A(H7N9) virus, including 49 deaths. This total number of cases includes two cases reported from Taiwan and the three cases reported in Hong Kong. In particular, Guangdong Province has reported eight more cases within a month since early December 2013.

The CHP will continue to maintain liaison with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Mainland and overseas health authorities to monitor the latest developments and obtain timely and accurate information. Local surveillance activities will be modified according to the WHO's recommendations.

To prevent avian influenza, please be reminded to observe strict hand hygiene, avoid touching mouth, nose or eyes and avoid visiting wet markets with live poultry or contacting poultry especially when travelling to avian influenza A(H7N9)-affected areas. Wash hands frequently with liquid soap, especially before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretion after coughing or sneezing. In addition, the following measures are also advised:

- Avoid touching poultry/birds/animals or their droppings;
- Wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water immediately in case of contact with poultry/birds/animals or their droppings;
- Build up good body resistance and have a healthy lifestyle. This can be achieved through a balanced diet, regular exercise, adequate rest, reducing stress and no smoking;
- Poultry and eggs should be thoroughly cooked before eating;
- Maintain good environmental hygiene;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- Avoid going to crowded places with poor ventilation if feeling unwell; and
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, furniture, commonly shared items and floor at least daily by using appropriate disinfectant (For non-metallic surface, disinfect with 1 part of household bleach in 99 parts of water, wait until dry and then rinse with water. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol).

For those with recent history of travel (especially to affected areas with avian influenza A(H7N9) cases) and have contact with poultry or history of visiting wet markets with live poultry, they should wear a mask and consult doctors promptly if they have flu-like symptoms, and inform the doctor of their travel history. You may wish to note that CHP has issued a **guideline on the prevention of avian influenza in workplace** which can be accessed from the CHP website at http://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/healthadvice2013_en.pdf.

I should be grateful if you could help disseminate the content of this letter to your colleagues, work associates and business partners so that they would be kept informed of the situation and to adopt preventive measures. More information on avian influenza is available at CHP website at <http://www.chp.gov.hk/>

Thank you in advance for your support.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed)

(Vincent S L WAN)
for Chief Officer (Licensing Authority)
Office of the Licensing Authority